

To: Secretary A.G. Kawamura, State Board President Al Montna
CDFA

From: Jim Churchill,
Churchill-Brenneis Orchard in the Ojai Valley

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about a vision for Ag in California in 2030.

My wife and I grow specialty tangerines in Ojai; we're a tiny little operation but we've been supporting ourselves for the past 10 years and we've participated over the past 21 years in developing a market for late spring seedless tangerines where none existed before.

My first point is that I hope there still is agriculture in California in 2030. A lot of economists and people in California and in the United States are all excited about the transition to the information economy and the service economy but you can't eat or wear either information or services. Agriculture is a complicated team effort requiring many skills and as there are fewer and fewer farmers I fear that the necessary skills might not survive. So looking to the future I hope we will institute or reinstitute classroom instruction in a wide range of subjects that support production.

Increasingly expensive energy suggests a number of options we might want to consider. There's no reason that growing should be confined to rural areas – cities have lots of places where food can be grown, and there should be policies and initiatives to support urban food production and distribution. I think that a place like Ventura County, which is superbly suited to high volume production, will continue to have a role supplying the entire nation with produce, but I also think that existing distribution models create a disconnect between us, farmers in Ventura County, and the 12 million people who live an hour or two south of us. I'm not sure how, or even whether, a state agency addresses this disconnect, but I know that the path that our Ojai Pixie Tangerines took to arrive in the local Ojai Vons' was that they were picked in Ojai, shipped to Fillmore where they were packed and shipped to Vernon, where they were repacked and shipped to a Vons' distribution center someplace, from where they were shipped to the Ojai Vons'. This is silly.

I know of no reason why we shouldn't be allowed and encouraged to farm our land for sunlight, to sell electricity back to the utilities, and get paid for it.

Everything we know about the U.S. diet and the health of our people suggests that as a nation we're eating too much highly processed stuff, and that we'd be better off if we ate more fresh vegetables and fruit. I think this is because in the United States our food culture is not about food, it's about corporate profit. I'm in favor of profit, but the way

local meat
processing -
state houses
straightforward

has been substituted to
our national farm policy encourages clearly undesirable outcomes is disgraceful. That's something I'd like to see different in 2030.

As an independent grower and shipper, I seek to establish a contract of sorts between myself and my customers: I want to produce and sell fruit that really tastes good, and that people will recognize as such. I'm not about to try to make my living selling at Farmers' Markets – they're fun and generate cash income but they're an enormous time-sink for the farmer. But I don't produce or sell enough fruit to interest a major grocery chain; nor do I want to try to. The big grocery operations are interested in standardization and predictability, and I'm interested in establishing a relationship built around flavor. So I need counter-parties out there in the world who recognize that we have something special and will take it on and sell it to their customers. I need there to be grocery operations of a "right size" to handle pallet loads of fruit on an ongoing basis and to sell to customers on the basis of flavor and seasonality, not standardization and predictability. This entails produce brokers and logistics and stores. I'd like to see a world in which Wal-Mart and Costco and Ralph's and Vons have not entirely taken over the job of supplying produce to people who eat, because they're not doing the job that needs to be done.

Two final notes: we need right now, without waiting until 2030, or even 2010, effective safeguards against invasion of exotic pests. Right now we have Asian Citrus Psyllid, which vectors Citrus Greening Disease, across the border in Tijuana. This is just as scary a prospect as I can imagine.

legitimizes the presence of Mexicans in the U.S.
And we need an immigration policy that allows Mexicans to work in agriculture in the United States, and allows growers to hire them. Farm work is not unskilled labor (though defined as such by people who never do it); it's hard work which ranges from being skilled in working hard all day to being highly technically skilled. In the United States, where there are now so few farmers that we've been dropped from the census, and where the cultural emphasis is on Donald Trump, fashion and fancy cooking, we don't produce farm workers. Mexico still produces farm workers. We need to be able to utilize their services.

*support
the drive.*